

TASMANIA POLICE

FILE NUMBER	
Tasmania Police	
FOI File Disclosure	
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District	Date
N	13 July 2001

Det Inspector M L OTLEY
Criminal Investigation Branch
LAUNCESTON

ENQUIRY ON INFORMATION PERTAINING TO AN INDIVIDUAL OR CONSPIRACY BY INDIVIDUALS TO TAKE PART IN THE ILLEGAL OPERATION OF IMPORTING FOXES INTO TASMANIA FROM MAINLAND AUSTRALIA AND BEING CAGED, REARED AND RELEASED INTO THE WILD

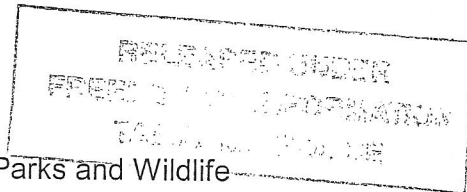
I report that enquiries were carried out into the above mentioned matter with the understanding and knowledge that the effect of the fox in this State would be absolutely devastating to native wild life and vegetation, along with the farming community.

Also, the agenda of this Task Force was to specifically concentrate on the illegal operations of importation of the fox or a co-conspiracy to import foxes for rearing and release, rather than the follow up of the many reported sightings of this fox. Some of these sightings were visited in the chance that they form part of the investigation of our agenda.

The initial enquiry as far as we were concerned commenced and took the following course.

On the morning of the 20 June 2001 at 9am, a Task Force under your hand was commenced. This Task Force was set up under your command, consisting of:

- Det Sergeant R C COAD No 436
- Det Constable T C ALLEN 560
- Det Constable N W McLARTY No 743
- Det Constable R L BAKER 1889
- Mr Glen ATKINSON, Department of National Parks and Wildlife



At 9.30am, a full briefing was held, the initial confidential briefing note was tabled and discussed.

The briefing note was:

BRIEFING NOTES: ILLEGAL IMPORTATION OF FOX'S INTO TASMANIA

INITIAL INFORMATION

Information started to filter in initially from various shooting groups throughout the State, starting approximately two weeks ago. The information related to [redacted] who go to Victoria every year shooting [redacted] bring fox pups into the State and releasing them.

INVESTIGATION

From the initial report, numerous people within the shooting fraternity were contacted by several rangers involved in the fox investigation to find out more details and to determine the reliability of the information.

SUBJECT REPORT - Continued

The reports that were received seemed to be very reliable and indicated that three (3) people were involved in the importing, raising and release of eleven (11) fox cubs into Tasmania.

At this point in time, we were unaware as to how many were involved in the capture from Victoria of these fox pups. It is alleged that these pups were brought into the State over the Launceston Show week of 1999 via the boot of a vehicle travelling on the Spirit of Tasmania. The pups were allegedly raised on a property in Longford area in a pen in the bush, until they were adult size (approx 2 months).

These pups were then allegedly split up and released into the wild, but we are unaware as to the location of these release sites. Allegedly, the same people involved in this release attempted a similar operation previously in 1977, in which eight (8) pups were allegedly imported and released. This belief was that this attempt had failed and resulting in a second attempt in 1999 to establish a population of foxes in Tasmania to improve the hunting.

?1997

SUMMARY

Two of the suspects allegedly involved in this operation are located in areas where we have had very positive fox sightings. These include Longford and St Helens. The information received so far indicates that a third person involved comes from Oatlands, which also corresponds with a number of recent fox sightings in that area,

The two people allegedly involved in the import and release of these fox pups are:

[REDACTED]

NOTE 1

Information received indicates that [REDACTED] may no longer be at the above address, but is still living in the St Helens area.

[REDACTED]

NOTE 2

The main informant is extremely concerned about threats that have been made about releasing information to authorities. His concerns relate directly to the possible action from [REDACTED] who has a history of violence. As a result, this informant refuses to co-operate in any other way other than that which is currently in place.

On perusing the initial briefing note and the contents of same, one can appreciate the delicate nature and urgency of an enquiry. An initial priority had to be the identity and the gaining of all information and knowledge and analysing of all information.

It was noted that the briefing notes specifically mentioned two (2) persons,

[REDACTED]

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SECTION 50(4)

SUBJECT REPORT - Continued

These two mentioned persons, along with the mentioned addresses, seems to run with a number of recorded recent sightings in the area of Carrick / Hadspen / Longford and at St Helens.

An initial duty was to obtain maps of areas concerned and a summary of those sightings. At this stage, enquiries were commenced to obtain profile on [REDACTED]

Enquiries were carried out on [REDACTED] who rightfully or mistakenly believes he sighted a fox. *(is this correct?)*

Enquiries were carried out at [REDACTED] which initially were negative, as were enquiries at [REDACTED]

On the morning of 25 June 2001, it was identified that [REDACTED] supplied information to spark this enquiry. Mr Glen ATKINSON was tasked through his department to organise a meeting between Task Force members and [REDACTED]. A meeting and briefing took place to discuss the actual contents and importance, validity of the information.

It came to notice that [REDACTED] actually obtained his information from [REDACTED]. Arrangements were made for [REDACTED] to meet Task Force members.

On 26 June 2001, Detectives spoke to the two informants at the Oatlands Police Station and a statement was obtained from [REDACTED] in reference to the original information.

[REDACTED] stated that around the period of 7 May 2001, he was leaving Allgoods Store, Main Road, Glenorchy, when he had a conversation with a male person who was paying attention to his dog, (which was in the rear of his vehicle, because of the unusual colouring). [REDACTED] vehicle had gun stickers on it and a conversation ensued about being deer shooters and localities. This person in a conversation that was very brief, mentioned that foxes had been brought into Tasmania via TT Line. He stated that there were two (2) lots, five (5) pups in one lot, six (6) in another and were being reared in bush somewhere. This person did say that [REDACTED] were responsible.

[REDACTED] says he treated it then as a bit of a joke, but on thinking about it, being a responsible shooter and the devastation that could be caused, he thought about the possibilities and spoke to [REDACTED] the National Parks and Wildlife.

This was all the information given. From that and through conversation somehow, the confidential briefing was submitted and I will return later to that briefing note and make some relevant mentions of the same.

Enquiries continued, which led to information coming from [REDACTED]. Task Force members travelled to New Norfolk and obtained a statement from [REDACTED]

SUBJECT REPORT - Continued

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In this statement, he talks of knowing and the activities of [redacted] had been in Victoria and on returning, had brought a fox pup into Tasmania.

Enquiries continued with the thought that [redacted] may have moved to the Carrick area, which once again, if that was the case, may have supported sightings in the Carrick / Hadspen / Illawarra Road areas.

Enquiries were made to gather further information on [redacted]

At this point in time and because of sightings in the Carrick and Hadspen areas and conversations with [redacted] and [redacted] who are both convinced, again rightly or wrongfully, that they saw a fox and subsequently a possible 'den' on [redacted] property, being located, a conservative effort was made to confirm or eliminate the prospect of a fox.

On 4/7/2001, for confirmation or elimination under guidance of a [redacted] who was the person in charge of the fox sightings and identification, but separate to our agenda, the suspect den was examined prior to and during excavations, and at the conclusion, was negative.

On 2/7/2001, a full briefing was held and a particular discussion of conversation was once again the original information and validity of that information.

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The original briefing note and is the crux of this enquiry and the Task Force agenda. With this in mind and in possession of briefing notes, Task Force personnel travelled to [redacted]

[redacted] was more than happy to take the time from his work site to meet and discuss this issue with us. The original statement he made was discussed, along with some briefing notes and details of the Confidential Note.

[redacted] expressed amazement as to how much information, details, names and locations could be logged through him. He was unequivocal in that the contents of his statement was as much as he ever said.

He stated again that the person he spoke to mentioned, [redacted] TT Line, Perth area, and that was it. There were no names, there were no locations as 'Longford' areas and there were property names. He has no knowledge whatsoever of the property [redacted] or persons particularly mentioned, [redacted]

As to the explanation on the Minister's Briefing Note, I will say this.

On 26 June 2001, when Task Force members met [redacted] and [redacted] at the Oatlands Police Station, it was mentioned by [redacted] in conversation that he was aware of [redacted] in the Perth area and actually mentioned the names of [redacted]

[redacted] supplied information for the original briefing note through his brother [redacted]

SUBJECT REPORT - *Continued*

[REDACTED]

Enquiries continued with focus on mentioned targets, namely [REDACTED] through this enquiry. All three were located and spoken to, all three were up front, forthright responsible people, who were amazed at what our approach was and the context of our enquiry.

Because of the nature of the enquiry and the idea of carrying it out as quietly as possible to avoid any possibility of public or media outcry, the approach was made as diplomatically as possible, as there were no direct allegations to be made.

[REDACTED] was spoken to at length. He had no knowledge of the illegal importation of foxes whatsoever. He is employed on the farm [REDACTED]. He has no understanding of why anyone would want to be involved in this process activity. In years gone by he was a shooter and was involved in [REDACTED] hunting on the Mainland. He was extremely co-operative. Of recent years he has had very little involvement with the sport or other shooters.

TASK FORCE INFORMATION

On 11 July 2001, due to enquiries carried out, [REDACTED] came to Police Headquarters, Launceston, and spoke to Task Force members. He was extremely co-operative and stated he was a hunter and does pursue [REDACTED] in Victoria. He expressed concern for the devastation would cause in this State if they were imported and released. He had no knowledge or information that would assist this enquiry.

[REDACTED] was spoken to in reference to information uncovered in this enquiry relevant to himself. On 10/7/01, he made a statement to Task Force members, where he stated that in 1984, he was on the Mainland and found a fox cub and kept it. He said it escaped the Werribee area a couple of days later. He openly states that at the time he was going to bring the cub to Tasmania. This statement supports to a degree information forthcoming from [REDACTED] as mentioned earlier.

During our enquiry, another person spoken to was a regular [REDACTED] hunter and professional shooter for the Forestry Department, was [REDACTED]. This person regularly hunts and has vast knowledge of foxes and the devastation that would be caused. He has a regular contact with large numbers of hunting groups and has had heard nothing direct or rumours that would assist or would throw any light on this matter.

Enquiries also led us to make enquiries and speak to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is one of a well known shooting / hunting family and is known to be involved in [REDACTED] shooting in Victoria. This enquiry led to no further information on this matter.

All persons spoken to express their concerns about the presence of the fox. All have stated they themselves will talk and listen and pass on any relevant information to the authorities.

Through the mentioned locations of Perth / Longford / Carrick / Hadspen, many landowners, farm owners, have been spoken to, and nobody can assist any further.

SUBJECT REPORT - Continued

In this enquiry with our agenda in mind, I make these summations and also take into account the other role of wildlife personnel on alleged sightings etc, that there is no solid physical, forensic / scientific evidence to support any findings of illegal importations of fox or presence of fox in Tasmania.

With our Agenda in mind, I cannot explain the full contents and information that came to be in the Minister's Briefing note. I can say that our investigation was a totally negative finding.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I feel that all persons spoken to co-operated fully, with total understanding and will continue to co-operate.

Forwarded for your information, perusal and any action you deem necessary.


R C COAD
DET SERGEANT 436

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